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COUNTRY Bulgaria

25X1SUBJECT Belene Concentration Camp

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1. The Belene concentration camp, known by the Communists as Trudovo Vuzpitatelno Obshtozhitie (TVO, Labor Educational Community), is located on the outskirts of Svishtov. The camp consists of seven separate camps bearing the numbers 1-7. Camps 1 and 2 are located on an island in the Danube River; the other five camps are located on the banks of the Danube.<sup>1</sup>
2. Some characteristics of the camps are:
  - a. The majority of the prisoners at camps 1 and 2 are elderly people who work in the various vegetable gardens on the island; camp 1 has only two flimsy wooden barracks for housing prisoners and has no winter shelter; camp 2 has one building for housing inmates during the winter;
  - b. Prisoners at camps 3, 4, and 5 are young men and men who are considered by the regime to be extremely dangerous; internees work only at strenuous physical labor such as digging ditches and dikes for the new irrigation project on the Danubian plain; work norms at these three camps are much higher than anywhere else in Bulgaria; and
  - c. Prisoners at camps 6 and 7 also are employed on the irrigation project, but have smaller work norms and work on easier terrain than do prisoners from camps 3, 4, and 5.
3. Prisoners receive inadequate quantities of food and the menu is monotonous. The bread ration is 150 grams per day, but is not always issued and is often too stale or moldy to be eaten. The men are given two meals a day, consisting of the same kind of soup every day.

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4. Inmates keep alive only by receiving food parcels from their families. Each prisoner is allowed one parcel a month which must not weigh over 10 kilograms. Parcels weighing as much as one gram over the allotted amount are returned to the sender and the prisoner is not allowed to receive any package during that month. Guards sometimes keep food for themselves instead of giving it to the addressees. Food items most in demand by the prisoners are zwiebach, sugar, lard, butter, and condensed milk.
5. Prisoners are allowed to write one letter every two weeks; however, both the length and the content of the letters are strictly censored. Each internee is allowed to receive one letter from his immediate family once every two weeks.
6. Visitors' day is 1 May each year; however, families are not always allowed to see the internees at this time.
7. The Militia personnel guarding the camps are brutal in their treatment of the prisoners. Their usual form of address to an inmate is, "Hey, you beast."
8. As of mid-September 1951, prominent internees at the various Belene camps were:
  - a. Khristo Buchvarov, engineer, 67 years old, 180 centimeters tall, weight 100 kilograms, blue eyes, grey-brown hair, clean shaven, married, has two children (Liliyana, 25, and Nikola, 22); was formerly one of the foremost engineers from Plovdiv and was leader of the Tsankov Sgovor<sup>2</sup> in the Plovdiv area, arrested soon after 9 September 1944 and sentenced to five years imprisonment; served two years, was freed, then interned at Karlovo; his fortune and property were confiscated and he was re-arrested on 1 May 1951 and sent to Belene two days later; his family still resides in Karlovo;
  - b. Dimitur Rusev Bratanov, lawyer, 68 years old, 176 centimeters tall, weight 97 kilograms, brown eyes, white hair, married, has three children (Iyubomir, 38, Zlatko, 26, and Mariya, 29); presently suffering from angina pectoris in advanced stages; born in Kharmanlii, was one of the foremost Plovdiv lawyers, Provincial Director of Plovdiv province during 1942-1943; was arrested after 9 September 1944 and sentenced to one year imprisonment by the Peoples Court, and upon release was interned in Khisar Momina Banya and denied the right to practice law; was re-arrested on 1 May 1951 and sent to Belene on 13 June 1951; his family lives in Khisar Momina Banya;
  - c. Colonel Kekhayov, 55 years old, former Engineer officer, 172 centimeters tall, weight 90 kilograms, brown eyes, white hair, married, has two children (one boy and one girl); was released from the Army after 9 September 1944; his son, Atanas, was expelled from the medical faculty at Plovdiv and sent for one year to Belene; he (sic) was arrested on 1 May 1951 and sent to Belene on 3 June 1951;
  - d. Ivan Popov, 55 years old, 172 centimeters tall, weight 95 kilograms, blond hair, blue eyes, married, has three children, long-time lawyer in Karlovo and Sofia; a right-wing Agrarian, sentenced by the Peoples Court after 9 September to an undetermined sentence; has a permanent limp as a result of a severe beating by the Militia; upon release from prison, he was interned in Khisar Momina Banya and re-arrested on 15 May 1951 and sent to Belene on 18 June 1951;

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- e. Lieutenant Colonel Nikola Kolev, 46 years old, formerly a mountain pack artillery officer, 180 centimeters tall, weight 80 kilograms, brown eyes, blond hair; as a soldier, he was known as brave and energetic; married for the second time four months prior to his arrest on 1 May 1951, was sent to Belene on 3 June 1951; his family resides in Karshiyaka;
  - f. Colonel Karoleev, 53 years old, former commander of 9 Infantry Regiment, 182 centimeters tall, about 100 kilograms, blue eyes, blond hair, married, has two daughters; was commandant of Plovdiv just prior to his release from active Army duty; after 9 September 1944 was interned in Peshtera, was arrested on 1 May 1951 and sent to Belene on 3 June 1951;
  - g. Stoyan Bonchev, about 60 years old, 180 centimeters tall, weight 85 kilograms, blue eyes, blond hair, married, has two daughters; was one of the leading merchants of Plovdiv and was primarily interested in rice and grains; has a wide circle of friends abroad; all his possessions were confiscated after 9 September 1944; was arrested on 20 May 1951 and sent to Belene during June 1951;
  - h. Ivan Bozhikov, 29 years old, 182 centimeters tall, weight 75 kilograms, brown eyes, blond hair, single, lawyer; one of the leaders of the "Legion" 3 in Plovdiv and was arrested and imprisoned after 9 September 1944, was sent from prison to work in the Bogdanov Dol; after his release, he worked as a sand hog in the excavations under the Plovdiv hills; re-arrested on 1 May 1951 and sent to Belene on 3 June 1951;
  - i. Colonel Khristo Popov, 58 years old, 184 centimeters tall, weight 90 kilograms, blue eyes, light blond hair sprinkled with gray, married; formerly Commanding Officer of 2 Engineer Regiment, released from active duty after 9 September 1944 and imprisoned for a short while; had the reputation of being a very able officer; was arrested on 1 May 1951 and sent to Belene on 3 June 1951;
  - j. Stoil Stoilov, 44 years old, 180 centimeters tall, weight 85 kilograms, brown hair, blue eyes, single; formerly one of the best dentists in Plovdiv, had studied in the United States; is an extreme anti-Communist, for which reason he was arrested more than three years ago and sent to Belene; and
  - k. General Sapunarov, personal details not known, reputedly one of the more capable generals; was one of the first prisoners to be sent to Belene and has been there more than four years.
9. During 1-15 May 1951, the Communists made large-scale nation-wide arrests in what was called "The action of the 50,000." Most of the people arrested were farmers. Between 3-20 June 1951, a large number of prisoners were sent to Belene to assist in the various labor projects, primarily the irrigation project.

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- 2.  Comment: A neo-Fascist political party.
- 3.  Comment: A prewar neo-Fascist student group led by Ivan Dochev.

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